Book Reviews

Preoperative Assessment

Jeremy N. Cashmen (Ed.). BMJ Books, London, 2001. 195 pages. ISBN 0-7279-1479-0

This book forms one of the series entitled, "Fundamentals of Anaesthesia and Acute Medicine" that is being published by the publishing division of the *British Medical Journal*. Although the authors have made efforts to internationalize the content of this volume by obtaining contributions from India, the United States, and Australia, the authors by at large look at the issues from the British perspective. That said, this slim and eminently readable volume contains much information of value and allows the reader to review issues pertinent to the subject title in an easy and comprehensive fashion. The chapter on "Premedication" is particularly well written and comprehensive as is that entitled, "Preoperative optimisation." The majority of the chapters were appropriately referenced and the attempt to provide information was clinically relevant and current. The North American reader will be surprised by only a passing reference to preoperative assessment clinics and the observation that in the United Kingdom over 90% of patients are visited prior to their operation by the anesthesiologist who provides the subsequent anesthetic services for the surgical procedure. Overall, this is a useful book, which will be enjoyed by residents and staff anesthesiologists interested in perioperative management.

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Low Flow Anaesthesia

Jan A. Baum. 2nd edition. Butterworth-Heinemann, 2001. 393 pages. \$80.00 (U.S.) ISBN 0 7506 4672 1

Low flow anesthesia is the second English edition originally published in 1996 by Jan Baum. Owing to the numerous technical and international safety standard changes in anesthetic technology which have occurred since the original edition, an updated version has resulted. This volume begins with a comprehensive review of all aspects of inhalational anesthesia from the history and evolution of breathing systems to the pharmacokinetics of volatile anesthetic agents.

Much valuable discussion is devoted to the technological aspects of low flow and closed-circuit management which is unavailable in other resources

concerning inhalational anesthesia. Consideration of all available anesthetic delivery, monitoring and safety equipment takes place in an up to date, concise manner. This is coupled with a review of the practical aspects of low flow anesthesia utilizing the standard inhalational agents as well as the more recently available volatiles. Professor Baum reviews the advantages of this technique while reinforcing the requirement for a considerable understanding of its technical and monitoring aspects in order to provide safe care.

Of special note are the numerous updates which have occurred since the previous edition. The most recent studies concerning inhalational agent degradation, absorbent use and alternate carrier gases have been included. As well, a review of the latest European international standardization guidelines concerning anesthesia equipment provides insight to North American anesthesiologists.

This is a clearly written, concise and practical review of an anesthetic technique which has become increasingly available to Canadian clinicians. I would recommend it as a standard reference for practicing anesthesiologists and, more importantly, as a definitive guide to anesthesia trainees.

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Key Topics in Anaesthesia Clinical Aspects (third edition)

T M Craft, P M Upton. BIOS Scientific Publishers Ltd., Oxford, 2001. 285 pages. ISBN 1-85996-132-0

This book is part of "The Key Topics Series" and a companion to "Key Questions in Anaesthesia". The preface to this third edition states that "the book has been largely rewritten with a clear focus on the clinical aspects of anaesthesia with particular reference to those working towards the Fellowship of the Royal College of Anaesthetists".

Those familiar with the previous edition will notice that there appears to be fewer topics as some have been combined (e.g., Thoracic Anaesthesia) and others eliminated (very good "refreshers" on physics and coagulation). These may have been eliminated in a desire to pursue a more clinical focus but I note that breathing systems and history of anesthesia (a list of

dates and events) remain with the addition of subjects that include Governance and the National Audits.

There is an attempt at a uniform approach to disease conditions with a brief description, list of problems in a bulleted fashion and anesthetic management. Some topics include management others do not. Some are presented in mainly paragraph form. There are no illustrations or tables. Two to three references are provided for most subjects followed by the useful feature of a list of related topics within the book including page numbers. There are web sites provided for more current information on some issues.

It is not possible nor is it the intention of the editors that this be a comprehensive textbook. I found this book to be uneven in the depth of information provided, “barely scratching the surface” in many of the topic areas. For example: minimally invasive surgery contained no meaningful discussion of cardiorespiratory changes that occur with CO₂ insufflation or potential advantages in the postoperative period. Algorithms for the management of cardiac arrhythmias are included but the section on difficult intubation does not include any algorithms for airway management. The index is not as comprehensive as it could be e.g., vomiting includes a final subsection on pulmonary aspiration, but aspiration is not included in the index.

Residents nearing their final exams are frequently looking for books which are portable, easy to read and able to provide a framework to which they may add their own notes. This new edition retains the handy “pocket size” of its predecessor though the font is not as easily read and there is not as much room for addition of handwritten notes in the margins. Overall, this would not be my first recommendation to residents preparing for either their written or oral fellowship exams.

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